

Maryland Awarded \$1 Million Under Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to Improve Infant and Child Health

First grant submitted by the State and the Health Care Reform Coordinating Council

Lt. Governor's Office News Release

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (July 28, 2010) - Two days after presenting Governor Martin O'Malley with a report showing federal health reform will save Maryland taxpayers \$829 million over ten years, Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, Co-Chair of the Health Care Reform Coordinating Council (HCRCC) applauded the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for securing nearly \$1 million in federal funds to improve infant and child health. The grant, awarded through the federal Affordable Care Act, provides funds that will support evidence-based home visiting programs focused on improving the wellbeing of families with young children.

"As we enthusiastically prepare to implement federal health reform in Maryland, we have an obligation to improve the quality of health in our communities, expand coverage and reduce costs. That means supporting evidence-based programs like the home visiting initiatives funded through this grant," Lt. Governor Brown said. "We can improve the health and wellbeing of our infants and children by helping vulnerable families master the skills that promote child health. The Health Care Reform Coordinating Council will continue to work with state agencies, the federal government and our partners in the private and nonprofit communities to ensure that we do everything in our power to bend the cost curve, provide more of our neighbors with access to care and improve the quality of care for every Marylander."

The Center for Maternal and Child Health and DHMH will work in coordination with the Children's Cabinet and Governor's Office for Children as well as other state and local child-serving agencies to administer services. Over the next four years, this grant will help create as many as 75 new health care jobs in communities across the state.

"This award contributes greatly to our ongoing efforts to improving the health of so many Maryland families, especially newborns," said Frances Phillips, DHMH Deputy Secretary for Public Health. "There is ample evidence showing that when young families have an informed and trusted home visitor guiding them, their children are far more likely to thrive in infancy and beyond. Improving nutrition, safety and access to medical care for newborns will further reduce our infant mortality rate."

In 2009, the statewide rate for infant mortality in Maryland declined to the lowest annual rate since the 1980s when the recording of such statistics began. Preliminary 2009 figures indicate that Maryland's infant mortality rate dropped 10 percent in 2009. There were 7.2 infant deaths recorded per 1,000 live births statewide, down from 8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2008. Despite this progress, the state must do more to reduce the racial disparity in infant mortality. The mortality rate increased to 13.6 per 1,000 births from 13.4 in 2008 among Maryland's African American families. This grant will provide the state with additional tools to fight the mortality disparity.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded \$88 million in grants to fund similar programs across the nation. Maryland joins 48 other states, the District of Columbia and all five territories in receiving funding. Each state and jurisdiction will conduct statewide assessments to identify existing home visiting programs and areas of high need.

On Monday, Lt. Governor Brown and DHMH Secretary - co-chairs of the HCRCC - released an interim report and announced that health care reform will save Maryland taxpayers \$829 million over the next decade and cut the number of uninsured Marylanders in half. The state will realize savings in large part because of reforms already implemented by the O'Malley-Brown administration which have expanded coverage to nearly 205,000 Marylanders since 2007. Brown stated at the press conference on Monday

that federal health reform can only be as successful as a state's ability to implement the federal law. Through the HCRCC, Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown have set a goal to provide a national model for implementation to expand coverage, improve quality and lower costs for all Marylanders. The HCRCC monitors and coordinates grant applications aimed to expand health coverage and improve the quality of care.

Since taking office in January 2007, Lt. Governor Brown has redefined the Office of the Lt. Governor from a largely ceremonial, ticket-balancing office into one of influence and substance. He leads carries an extensive portfolio of responsibility, including the administration's work to expand and improve health care. Brown chairs the Maryland Health Quality and Cost Council and co-chairs the HCRCC. In 2008, he championed efforts to pass the Veterans Behavioral Health Act which expanded and improved mental and behavioral health services for veterans transitioning from combat to the community. This year, Brown and his staff successfully championed the Maryland False Health Claims Act of 2010 which will allow the state to recover \$46.5 million in stolen Medicaid funds in FY11, a \$20 million increase over FY10. He also led efforts to enact a Patient Centered Medical Home program to offer providers incentives to spend more time with patients and practice preventative care.